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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: LAGOS ESTABLISHED OWN ELECTORAL REFORM COMMITTEE

11. (SBU) Summary: Governor Babatunde Fashola of Lagos State has received the report of an Electoral Reform Committee he had set up to recommend an improved and revised electoral process for the state and the Federal Government of Nigeria (GON). The Governor said that the report will be submitted to the GON as part of Lagos contributions to the GON initiated electoral reform process. Fashola intends to use the committee's recommendations to help improve the conduct of local council elections by the state's Independent Election Commission. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On December 3, 2007, Governor Fashola inaugurated a "Political Reform Advisory Committee" with a mandate to prepare a position paper for the state that would be submitted to the GON as Lagos' contribution to the GON initiated electoral reform process. Although the committee shared similar terms of reference with the National Electoral Reform Panel (NERP), Governor Fashola explained that his committee was not a parallel body to the NERP. He stated that this committee will offer suggestions on how Nigeria can actualize its dream of an electoral process that will guarantee truly free and fair elections and ensure that the people's votes count.

13. (SBU) On July 14, Governor Babatunde Fashola received the report from the State Electoral Reform Committee. Idowu Ajanaku, Governor Fashola's Special Advisor on Public Affairs told PolSpec that the State Electoral Reform Committee's reports have been forwarded to Abuja. He also confirmed that the recommendations will reflect in future amendments to the state's electoral laws that guide the conduct of local council elections. (Note: While the recommendations have not yet been released to the public, it is presumably similar to the report of the National Electoral Reform Panel, touching on INEC composition, appointment of INEC Chairman and commissioners, methods of conducting elections and voting, responsibilities of election tribunals, political party activities, and campaign funding. End Note.)

14. (SBU) Comment: The move to support electoral reform at a state level is commendable, as Lagos is the first state to take this approach. However, this move also highlights the Lagos-Abuja competition, where Lagos, as a non-PDP government, attempts to be the front line in development and democracy. As in the 2006 census, when Lagos conducted its own parallel census to prove that the results published by the Federal Government were inaccurate, this committee may be Lagos State's way of forging ahead towards electoral reform and showing that the Action Congress (AC) is more proactive on matters of democracy and governance.

BLAIR